

The Pursuit of God

Chapter One: Following Hard after God

Ladies, last week we saw how “The Pursuit of God” was written. It started with a simple man whom God gave a burden in his heart.

The “burden” God had given Tozer was to motivate people who claimed to be followers of Christ but who had little knowledge of God and little desire to know Him better.

I want to speak from my heart today. The burden that God placed on Tozer’s heart in 1948 is a burden that I share 61 years later. It is a part of our Christian walk that is missed by so many Christians today. That is why I felt the Lord leading me to do this study.

We say “You can have a personal relationship with God”. Not everybody knows what is meant by that or even how to do it. That is what we will be learning in the study.

Ladies, we are living in a day and age where we are losing our Christian rights. They are taking God out of everything; in fact there is an article from Christianity Today on our website under “world news” that states: if you are for Pro-life, then our Homeland Security calls you a “rightwing extremist”.

Satan is attacking with full force and it is not going to get any easier. This is why we need to be grounded in our spiritual walk and develop a deep intimate relationship with God.

We are living in the End times. Luke 18:8 says: “***...when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?***” Luke 18:8 (NKJV)

Ladies, My heart’s desire is that He will find us all faithful to the end.

Ephesians 6:12 says “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the

darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (NKJV)

So how do we combat Satan: Ephesians 6:11 states that we need to put on the Armor of God each day. He is our source of Strength and it is only through Him that we will be able to do this.

The idea of pursuing God should not be considered “Mystical” – it should be a way of life for a Christian.

Some called Tozer a Mystic because of his desire to love God. This was his response:

TOZER'S RESPONSE TO HIM BEING A MYSTIC

“Some of my friends good-humoredly—and some a little bit severely—have called me a ‘mystic.’ Well I’d like to say this about any mysticism I may suppose to have. If an archangel from heaven were to come, and were to start giving me, telling me, teaching me, and giving me instruction, I’d ask him for the text. I’d say, ‘Where’s it say that in the Bible? I want to know.’ And I would insist that it was according to the scriptures, because I do not believe in any extra-scriptural teachings, nor any anti-scriptural teachings, or any sub-scriptural teachings. I think we ought to put the emphasis where God puts it, and continue to put it there, and to expound the scriptures, and stay by the scriptures. I wouldn’t—no matter if I saw a light above the light of the sun, I’d keep my mouth shut about it ‘til I’d checked with Daniel and Revelation and the rest of the scriptures to see if it had any basis in truth. And if it didn’t, I’d think I’d just eaten something I shouldn’t, and I wouldn’t say anything about it. Because I don’t believe in anything that is unscriptural or that is anti-scripture.”
—*What Difference Does the Holy Spirit Make?*,
by A. W. Tozer

Notice how Tozer passed everything he learned through the scripture to validate it. If it was not in the Bible he did not give it a second glance. This is what we should do. Notice: Tozer did not put his faith in men, he didn’t take what they said to be the final word – he put his

faith in scripture. If anything contradicted scripture – you know it is not of God.

How do we discern what is right and what is wrong? As we have talked about this before in our studies, we need to learn what is true so that we can detect the fake. For example, when I worked at a bank we had to examine and learn what the real dollar looked like so we would be able to know the counterfeit.

So as we study we will filter everything through scripture. This should be applied to everything we do. You know the acronym WWJD (What Would Jesus Do). We should always be asking What does Jesus say about this – and search the scripture.

Chapter One begins our pursuit: Following Hard after God

*My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.
Psalms 63:8 (KJV)*

The new living translation puts it this way:
*I cling to you; your strong right hand holds me securely.
Psalms 63:8 (NLT)*

David was not passive in his devotion, for he continued to cling to the Lord and rest in the safety of His right hand.

Those that follow hard after God would soon fail, if God's right hand did not uphold them. It is he that strengthens us and comforts us

So when we talk about following hard, or pursuing a deeper relationship with God. We are talking about being so close to God that we feel His presence in our life. He is not a God who is out in the distance watching from afar. Ladies, He lives within your heart. He knows your name, he knows how many hairs are on your head.

God has feelings. He is grieved when we don't follow him. He rejoices when we rejoice. He is our comforter, when we don't have the strength to go on.

God knows us! He even knows how often you speak His name –

Malachi 3:16 (NKJV) "Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, And the Lord listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the Lord And who meditate on His name."

So my question would be: How well do we know Him? How much time in our day do we spend with God?

If you spent the same amount of time with your husband or a loved one as you do with God, how would they rate that time spent – would they even know you were there? Would they feel the relationship was all about you? Did you even acknowledge them? Would they feel as if they were the most important person in their life and they had your undivided attention?

If you spent the same amount of time cultivating a relationship with your husband or loved one as you do God, how much would you know about them?

If someone asked you about the attributes of your husband or loved one, you could probably rattle some right off the top of your head. Do you know the attributes of God? Here are some just to mention a few:

1. Omnipotent – All powerful (Luke 1:37)
2. Omnipresent – All present He is everywhere (Psalm 139:7-10)
3. Omniscient – All knowing (Psalm 147:5)
4. Immutable – Unchangeable (Malachi 3:6)
5. Goodness – (Psalm 34:8)

A relationship takes work – we cannot expect to know someone with one visit, it is an ongoing process – so why should we expect to know God with one visit?

We must continually grow spiritually. Just as our body needs food – so our spirit needs spiritual food. We need to be in the word daily in prayer daily communicating with God. How else are we going to be able to fight the good fight as Paul's says.

Ladies, Salvation is not a means to an end. Sadly, some have said "I have accepted Jesus Christ into my life and that is enough". "I am content to being a child of God".

Is that "enough" for you? Or do you want to say as David said, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? " Psalms 42:1-2 (KJV)

Ladies, we need to have a thirst for God! Salvation is only the beginning to a glorious pursuit of knowing and loving God.

David wrote Psalm 63 when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

Psalm 63:1

There in the desert, he was hungry and thirsty, but his deepest desires were spiritual, not physical. With his whole being, body and soul, he yearned for God's satisfying presence ([v. 5](#); [42:1-2](#)).

It says in Matthew 5:6 (NKJV) "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled."

Ladies, we need to have a thirst for God. To know him more and fully give our lives to him.

When you are walking and living the Christian life. People notice it don't they? Have you ever had someone come up to and say "Are you Religious?"

Tozer talks about the essence of genuine religion.

When we think of “Religion” today we think of sets of rules and traditions right – but as Tozer states, Genuine religion is our Personal Relationship with Jesus Christ. That He came to earth in the form of a man to die on the cross to pay for my sins, for our sins, that we may be able to live with God throughout all eternity.

John 17:3: *“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”* John 17:3 (NKJV)

Jesus Christ is the source of life: He is the way to life and He is the truth of life. He is the very substance of life, its very being and energy

It has more to do with quality and with what life really is than with duration. To live forever in the present world is not necessarily a good thing. The world and man's body need changing. That changed life is found only in eternal life. The only being who can be said to be eternal is God. Therefore, life—supreme life—is found only in God. But more essential, the person has the supreme quality of life, life with Jesus Christ Himself.

John 10:28 (NKJV) *“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand “*

So once we have accepted Jesus Christ into our heart as our personal savior, no one can snatch us from the Father’s hand. We cannot lose our salvation.

So before you can pursue a relationship with God, you have to ask yourself, have I asked Jesus Christ into my heart? Do I believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Just because a family member is saved does not mean that we are, right? Just because you attend a Bible believing church does not mean you are saved, there are many unsaved people in our pews today. Just because you are a kind person always willing to help others does not

mean you are saved. You have to personally ask Jesus Christ into your heart and accept His death, burial, and resurrection.

Then once you have done that, the glorious pursuit begins.

Knowing God is personal. The body of believers is important and we need to assemble together. As we learned in the book of Ephesians, each part of the family has his/her role – whether it is a hand, a foot, or an ear.

We can edify and encourage each other. We can be there for each other and support each other in these troubled times. However; when we stand before the Lord, we individually will be held accountable. Our sins have been forgiven Christ has paid the penalty for them – but we will be accountable with what we have done for the Lord.

Tozer says, “To have found God and still pursue Him is the soul’s paradox”.

A limitless God means there is no end to our pursuit of Him! What a paradox that is: to know God and yet still to pursue Him!

There are two examples of individuals who knew God well were Moses and Paul. Yet, both had a strong desire to know more of God – neither was satisfied with his level of knowledge.

Moses:

Ex 33:13 (NKJV) “Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people.”

Ex 33:17-18 (NKJV) “So the Lord said to Moses, “I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name.” And he said, “Please, show me Your glory.”

The true servant of God is concerned more about the glory of God than about anything else. Moses and the Jews had seen God's glory in the pillar of cloud and fire, as well as in the "storm" on Mount Sinai, but

Moses wanted to see the intimate glory of God revealed to him personally. God did give Moses a guarded glimpse of His glory and he was satisfied.

Notice in verse 17 – The Lord said to Moses “**I know you by name**”. He was not a distant God – Moses had an intimate relationship with God.

Paul:

Philippians 3:10 (NKJV) “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, “

Paul wanted to “Know” God experientially “ginosko” - That was the goal of his heart, and to this he sacrificed everything.

Philippians 3:8 (NKJV) “Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ”

Job said *“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You.” Job 42:5 (NKJV)*

Until now, Job's knowledge of God had been indirect and impersonal; but that was changed. Job had met God personally.

We will face opposition in life. When we try to live a Godly life we will be persecuted, as it says in *2 Timothy 3:12 (NKJV) “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”*

The scripture continues: *2 Timothy 3:13-17 (NKJV) “But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

¹⁴ But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, ¹⁵ and

that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Ladies, remember the Armor of God. Trust in the scripture and pass everything you hear through them.

As pastor said in his message last week on Nehemiah 4: *"Satan never bothers with half hearted people who are content with a ho hum spiritual existence."*

If you were not here Sunday – you need to hear this message. It is on the website under the tab "media center" "sermon audios". Pastor discusses the Devil's design and his demise.

As Tozer mentioned in the book, Complacency is a deadly foe to all spiritual growth.

For many of us this complacency and lack of acute desire is the root cause of our lack of significant spiritual growth.

We need to say as Paul did in *Philippians 3:14-15 (NKJV)* *"I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you."*

Tozer brought out 60 years ago that we need to find God amid all the religious externals like programs, methods, organizations and a world of nervous activities which occupy time and attention. The religious externals can never satisfy the longing of the heart. I can only imagine what he would say about the church today. The shallowness of our inner experience, the hollowness of our worship all testify that we, in this day, know God only imperfectly, and the peace of God scarcely at all.

Having activities in the church are fine and they can be edifying. But we need to be careful that we don't do just to impress others, but that

we genuinely are serving and worshiping God. It is only God that should receive honor and glory in everything we do and say.

Many search for God-and. It is the “ands” that we need to strip away.

God wants to be wanted. But he does not want to share us. We should come to Him and praise Him for who He is, not for what he will do for us.

Too often we approach God simply because we have needs. Or maybe even we begin a prayer by praising Him and thanking Him – but we always get in there our petitions. Yes God wants us to petition Him and that is a form of prayer. But have you ever just sat down and simply praised Him with no other agenda in mind.

To illustrate: Has your husband brought you flowers just because he loves you – not for any special occasion?

Have you ever looked across the room and saw your husband and it brought goose bumps as your heart filled with joy because you love him so much?

This is what Tozer is saying when he said: “We need not fear that in seeking God only we may narrow our lives or restrict the motions of our expanding hearts. The opposite is true. We can well afford to make God our All.”

This is what God wants. He wants us to worship and love Him for Himself not for what He has done for us or for what He will do for us.

One thing I do need to comment on and I don’t want it to take away from the purpose of what God is stirring in you.

Tozer mentioned the old English 14th century classic book called The Cloud of Unknowing. The quote that Tozer mentions from this book is the fact that we should lift our heart unto God with a meek stirring of love; and mean Himself, and none of His goods.

What Tozer got from this quote was what we just discussed that we should love God for who he is and not for what he will do for you.

The Emerging church uses this old English classic in regards to what they call “Centering Prayer” which is a contemporary practice of Christian meditation developed by Trappist monks [William Meninger](#), [Basil Pennington](#) and [Thomas Keating](#) in the 1970s.

I am not going to go into great details about “Centering Prayer” because this is not what Tozer is referring to. Brenda is going to be talking about the Emerging Church at our Summer Event so I don’t want to go into details in that I do not know exactly what she is going to do.

Remember what we said in the beginning of this class. We do not recommend reading every book that is mentioned. Tozer had a deep love for God and his main purpose and burden was to show believers that they can have a personal relationship with God. He used a quote – which expresses that and that is all.

Scripture says: **John 6:24-27** (NKJV) *“when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. ²⁵ And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You come here?” ²⁶ Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. ²⁷ Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”*

The disciples may have been impressed that so many people stayed through a storm in order to seek their Master, but Jesus was not impressed. He knows the human heart. He knew that the people originally followed Him because of His miracles ([John 6:2](#)), but now their motive was to get fed!

Jesus pointed out that there are two kinds of food: food for the body, which is necessary but not the most important; and food for the inner man, the spirit, which is essential. What the people needed was not food but life, and life is a gift. Food only sustains life, but Jesus gives eternal life.

Ladies, so many Christians seek God for what he can do for them. As we see here in the scriptures that God knows our heart – He knows whether we are seeking Him to worship Him or just to meet our needs.

Try this week in some of your prayers to just love God – Tell Him you love Him for Himself. You can Praise Him for what He has done in your life, Praise Him for the beauty of His creation, Thank Him for saving your soul, But refrain from asking something of Him in every prayer. Worship Him!